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ABSTRACT

Existing research knowledge concerning the self-concept of Asian American children, particularly in relation to bilingual education, is explored in this paper. The significance of the literature review is considered to rest on the assumption that Asian Americans' physical characteristics, language, and cultural orientation make their self-concept highly vulnerable to the potentially adverse effects of the English-dominant school. The literature review, however, is said to reveal a paucity of relevant research on these children's self-concept. Due to the scarcity of empirical data, no generalizations are made in the report about self-concept among the different Asian American populations, either separately or as one group. However, observations included about the available data point out problems in definition, measurement, and interpretation, especially concerning the nondifferentiation of different groups of Asian Americans; nonstandardization and nonequivalency of translations in self-concept test instruments; demand characteristics of the testing situation (such as linguistic ability); and construct validity of tests. The importance of further research inquiry along these lines is emphasized, and recommendations for future research on self-concept among bilingual Asian American children are presented. (Author/MJL)

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THE SELF-CONCEPT OF BILINGUAL ASIAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN

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THE SELF-CONCEPT OF BILINGUAL ASIAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN

Kalei Inn

Introduction

A primary goal of bilingual education is the enhancement of the children's self-concept (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1975). The central underpinning of this goal is that in the English-dominant school bilinguality and membership in an identifiable ethnic group act to adversely affect the self-concept of the children. That is, being speakers of non-English native languages who belong to non-Anglo cultural traditions often subject the children to school experiences that cause them to lose confidence in themselves and to feel apologetic and ashamed of their home language, cultural tradition and, by extension, themselves. For example, the instruction includes minimal reference to ideas, subjects or experiences familiar to the children or their cultural group (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1975). The teaching staff and the administrators are rarely members of the children's own ethnic groups who could serve as role models. The feeling of being somehow less significant and less valued than children of European heritage is further conveyed when the curriculum and the textbooks praise the contributions of Caucasian men and women while reporting misinformation that often discredit ethnic minority groups (Cortes, 1972).

In contrast to the traditional English-dominant school, bilingual educational programs provide an environment that reinforces a sense of belonging, a sense of identity and a sense of competence, all of which are necessary for the development of a positive self-concept. In such an environment the curriculum reflects the historical, cultural, and literary tradition of the native cultures as well as the pluralistic American culture, while the teaching staff includes members of the children's ethnic minority groups who can serve as role models.

The aim of this chapter is to describe the existing knowledge regarding the self-concept of Asian-American children particularly in

bilingual educational programs and to analyze the conceptual and methodological issues in assessing these children's self-concept. The self-concept of Asian-American children with special reference to bilingual education is of interest for several reasons. One reason is that Asian-Americans may be exceptionally susceptible to the adverse effect of the implicit ethocentricity of the curriculum and instruction in the traditional English-dominant school. This is because the teacher in Asian cultural traditions is a highly significant person whose opinion is valued. Consequently, the teacher's indifference or disparaging of the native language or culture could easily be internalized by the children who could begin to reject themselves and their parents causing still greater loss of self-esteem.

A second reason is that Asian-American children possess visually distinctive physical characteristics that evoke in others certain preconceptions and stereotypes commonly associated with the cultural-linguistic group. These salient characteristics often lead others to presume the children's identification and affiliation with their ethnic group regardless of their actual affiliation or sense of affinity toward their own ethnic group. For example, many Chinese-Americans have reported that they still receive compliments on their excellent spoken English and are asked where they are from. The implication is clearly that because of their physical features, these Asian-Americans are necessarily foreigners who would speak with a noticeable accent. To be considered an aberration of the typical American can have serious adverse ramification for the development of a positive self-concept.

A third reason is that an examination of Asian-American's self-concept may be of scientific interest with relation to the question of the significance of self-concept for academic performance. That is, the analysis of the self-concept of Asian-Americans, who as a group has attained higher academic achievement than other ethnic minorities (Daniels & Kitano, 1970), may provide useful insight on some possible correlates of achievement for ethnic minority children.

Self-Concept

The self-concept is a multifaceted construct that can be broadly defined as a person's perception of himself that is believed to influence his behavior (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1966). It represents the beliefs, hypotheses and assumptions a person has about himself, including notions of the kind of individual he is and the characteristics and outstanding traits he possesses (Coopersmith & Feldman, 1967). That is, an individual may see himself as being mathematically gifted, physically attractive, but socially awkward. While the overall self-conception is important, it is viewed by some as "secondary to the emotional tone of the esteem value of the perception" (Fitts, Adams, Radford, Richard, Thomas, Thomas & Thomas, 1971, p. 23.) Indeed, most students of the self-concept literature appear to focus on this discussion such that "self-concept" is sometimes used interchangeably with "self-esteem" (Korman, 1968).

Chinese-Americans

Three published self-esteem instruments in Chinese for bilingual Chinese-American children have been located (Winters, 1980): 1) the Elementary Students' Attitude Test from the Bilingual Education Project at William Land School in Sacramento, California, 2) the Preschool Racial Attitude Measure from the Department of Psychology at the Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and 3) the Self-Concept and Motivation Inventory from the Emergency Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title VII Program in Los Angeles, California. All three instruments appear to be Chinese translations of English versions; thus, the potential problem of equivalency of concepts between the two versions needs to be taken into account when using these tests. However, none of these instruments were cited in the literature reviewed.

In terms of unpublished instruments there is one measure of self-esteem (ASIAN, INC., 1977) and two of ethnic self-esteem (Inn, 1975).

For the ASIAN, INC. study of the Title VII Chinese Bilingual Pilot Program in the San Francisco Unified School District a self-esteem instrument was developed to ascertain how satisfied children are with their perceived personal and social image. This self-image was thought to be comprised of various domains including physical appearance, confidence/achievement, acceptance, expectations, global affect (total emotional self) and ethnic identity. Ethnic identity connoted cross-cultural attitudes such as the feeling of being Chinese-American, and the acceptance or rejection of Chinese cultural characteristics. The The test was designed to measure children's self-esteem in relation to their success in school and their interpersonal relations.

The test was administered to 48 children. The Title VII students were randomly selected from the second and fifth grades. A control group of second graders was chosen from the same grades from whom there were pre- and post-academic scores available. Since a control group of fifth graders for whom the necessary pre- and post-academic scores were unavailable, a group of Chinese-speaking children from a school on the edge of Chinatown was chosen. However, they may have represented a more biased control than the second grade control group.

The results show a lack of significant correlations between self-esteem and the California Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) Scores but a significant positive correlation between CTBS scores and confidence, one of the domains of the self-esteem instrument. The authors interpreted this to mean that academic ability may be valuable in interpersonal relationships.

A comparison of the mean scores on the test between the project and the control students shows no significant difference between the second graders in the two groups. Within the older groups, however, the project children indicate higher self-esteem in two areas (the acceptance and the global affect domains) and lower self-esteem in one (achievement in school) than the control group. The authors considered this an indicator of a possible gradual development of higher self-esteem among

participants in bilingual education programs. This interpretation was generally supported by the results that show higher self-esteem among fifth graders in both programs and a consistent tendency for those students to give neutral answers and to avoid giving negative responses.

As has been the case with a majority of the self-concept or self-esteem studies, the self-esteem instrument used in this study has been only partially validated. That is, internal validity alone has been established. Further validation and testing for reliabiltiy are required in order to increase the usefulness of the measure. Under these conditions, the results of the study is meaningful for the tested group only and should not be generalized to other populations.

Inn (1975) used two instruments to measure ethnic self-esteem among primarily bilingual fifth and sixth grade Chinese-Americans. One of these instruments was an adaptation of Tang's (1971) adaptation of the Language Matched Guise Personality Judgment Test (Lambert, et al., 1966). The selection of positive versus negative adjectives among the bipolar descriptors of the speakers of each of the language or dialects was seen to reflect general attitudes toward a given language or dialect and its speaker. By extension, it was assumed that since language is a symbol of one's identity (Meyerson, 1969), evaluations of one's language reflects evaluations of oneself with respect to one's ethnicity--one's ethnic self-esteem.

The second measure was a 17-item inventory referring to feelings and attitudes toward being a Chinese-American. It was developed specifically for this study. The items were designed to measure five dimensions of ethnic self-esteem. These were (1) pride in Chinese language, (2) pride in the Chinese customs and heritage, (3) pride in Chinese physical chacteristics, (4) identification with Chinese-Americans as a group, and (5) perceived significance of Chinese-Americans and their heritage for the larger society.

The results of the Language Matched Guise Personality Judgment Test show that the students as a group tend to react slightly more favorably to English than the Chinese guise, although, on the whole, all four guises receive equally favorable ratings. Of special interest is the tendency for those expressing pride in Chinese to also express pride in English. This suggests that an acceptance of one's ethnicity and language enables one to accept another's ethnicity and language or vice versa. This might also indicate that the children do not or have not developed differential attitudes toward the two languages.

In terms of the relationship between the school context and ethnic self-esteem as expressed on the Language Guise Test, the results show a nonsignificant inverse relationship between the number of Chinese-Americans in the classroom and the ratings of the Chinese language guises. However, there is a slight tendency for Chinese-Americans on the school staff increases. This reflects the importance of role models of like-members on the staff for legitimizing the importance of Chinese-Americans in the the school.

The results of the 17-item inventory on ethnic self-esteem indicate that overall the students have a medium level of ethnic self-esteem. In terms of the relationship between this measure of ethnic self-esteem and school environment, it was found that the number of Chinese-Americans in a class correlated inversely ($r = -0.19$, $p = .04$) with ethnic self-esteem. This means that as the number of Chinese-Americans in a class increases from 3 to 46 percent, the Chinese-American students' ethnic self-esteem decreases. However, since the sample did not include classes comprising a distinct majority of Chinese-Americans, it is difficult to ascertain whether ethnic self-esteem woud increase as the proportion of Chinese-Americans increases to constitute a majority, thus, indicating a curvilinear relationship between classroom composition and ethnic self-esteem as hypothesized. Interviews with participants of the study, however, provided evidence that some of them would definitely enjoy being in the majority in a classroom. If this is the case, ethnic self-esteem

could increase as the proportion of Chinese-Americans constitutes a majority.

The author also explored the relationship between ethnic self-esteem and sense of marginality. A sense of marginality refers to a feeling of lack of ease, comfort or belonging in relation to others in a given situation. It may also involve a feeling of being unappreciated, insignificant, and invisible to the rest of the group.

A sense of marginality may be aroused in individuals when they are not into the "spirit of the group" and feel unable to understand the thoughts and sentiments of the others (Stonequist, 1937). An unfamiliarity with the thoughts and manners of others could cause individuals to feel anxious, ambivalent and generally uncertain as to the others' perception of their status in relation to the others and their expectation of them in a particular situation. These sentiments are expected to be especially salient when the group is one having the potential to exercise the power over and distribute rewards to its members (Antonovsky, 1956).

Unlike the classical concept of "marginal man" (Park, 1928, 1950; Stonequist, 1937), sense of marginality is thought to be situation-specific. Whereas the marginal man concept depicts a relatively constant set of personality traits, such as oversensitivity, ambivalence, lack of interest in life, and excessive self-consciousness (Stonequist, 1937), sense of marginality is conceptualized as a set of reactions concerning oneself in relation to others in a given situation. This reaction may vary from one situation to another.

The sense of marginality instrument was a pencil and paper self-administered questionnaire. It measured the respondent's sense of comfort or lack of comfort with relation to Caucasian-Americans and to Chinese-Americans in specific situations.

The correlation among ethnic self-esteem, sense of marginality vis-a-vis Caucasian-Americans and sense of marginality vis-a-vis Chinese-Americans produced some intriguing and unexpected results (Inn, 1975, p. 112). Generally, the results show that these three constructs relate in various ways such that it became clear that an affinity to a cultural heritage need not necessarily accompany a sense of affinity with its corresponding membership group. For instance, one finding is that the larger group--over a third--of the students in the sample express high ethnic self-esteem and high sense of marginality to both Caucasian- and Chinese-Americans. This is contrary to the assumption that having pride in one's ethnicity would most likely be associated with feeling at ease with one's ethnic membership group as compared to the nonmembership group. The results, however, suggest that ethnic self-esteem as measured reflects evaluations of the Chinese and their heritage including the language apart from the personal selves. The situation-specific sense of marginality measure, on the other hand, reflects evaluations of personal selves in terms of their relationship to Caucasian- and Chinese-Americans.

While this study yields some intriguing findings, it is necessary to be cautious when interpreting the data. This is because (1) the design of the study has some limitations, having provided minimal control of a number of school and student characteristic variables, and (2) the instruments require further validation and refinement.

More recently, Kwok (1979) employed the Morland Picture Interview (MPI) (1969) to assess students' racial/ethnic attitudes about themselves and other groups among 150 primary grade Chinese-Americans in San Francisco. This instrument was an indivdually administered interview process in which the stimuli were six MPI photographs of Chinese and European children from four to six years of age. A series of questions accompanied each photograph to measure cognitive activities and affective levels including acceptance, preference, self-preference, and bias. The results show that regardless of language orientation, the Chinese-

American children accept and are biased toward their membership group. Whereas the monolingual Chinese speakers demonstrated the highest degree of Chinese-orientation, the bilingual English and Chinese speakers exhibit a balance of racial/ethnic attitudes.

Filipino-American

No attitude or self-esteem instrument has been located for Tagalog speakers (Winters, 1980). One published paper (Yee and Lee, 1977) on Filipino-American high school students was found. It describes a primary prevention program that aims to foster in bilingual Filipino-American adolescents a positive view of their cultural identity or ethnic self-esteem. The program was implemented as a mental health component of a given school's 6-month-old Filipino bilingual-bicultural course. The assumption underlying the program is that normal individuals of Asian cultural backgrounds experience stresses in their everyday life in a culture that is different from, if not in conflict with, their own culture.

To help Filipino-American adolescents cope with the stresses, two of the program goals are (1) to assist the students to clarify Filipino and Western values as a way to foster a balance between the two cultural expectations, and (2) to help the students develop a stronger sense of self-identity as Filipino-Americans. While the authors reported the success of the program, it would have been informative if they had provided some empirical data to illustrate the way in which cultural identity is an area of concern among bilingual Filipino-American high school students.

Indo-Chinese-Americans

Of the four studies (Oanh & Michael, 1977; Kim, Y. Y., 1979; Skinner & Hendricks, 1978; Smither & Rodriguez-Giegling, 1979) on Indo-Chinese-Americans, only one dealt with children. To summarize briefly the findings of the three studies involving adults, Kim (1979) collected

data on the intrapersonal and interpersonal communication patterns of Indo-Chinese refugee heads of households in Illinois. He reported a positive relationship between the refugee's interpersonal communication with Americans and a positive self-image, perceptions of similarity between self and Americans, lower feelings of alienation and greater English competency.

Skinner and Hendricks (1978) discussed the role educational and other institutions have played in shaping the ethnic self-identity of Indo-Chinese refugees as an "ethnic minority" group in the United States versus "refugees." The authors suggest that moving or being moved from a "refugee" to an "ethnic minority" status may entitle the Indo-Chinese to certain financial occupational, and educational resources. This, however, they note, may also lead them to consciously or unconsciously stress the negative attributes of the ethnic minority status.

Smither and Rodriguez-Giegling (1979) focused on marginality, modernity and anxiety in Vietnamese and Laotian refugees in the United States. Marginality was defined according to Stonequist's (1937) and Park's (1950) concept of the "marginal man" as one who is on the periphery of two cultures. It was measured by a 14-item Marginality Scale to assess insecurity feelings, self-pity and sensitivity.

The results show that when compared to the Americans (44) in the sample, the Vietnamese (28) and the Laotians (17) score lower on modernity and higher on marginality. Of particular interest is the negative correlation between marginality and anxiety among the Laotians as opposed to a direct correlation between the two variables among the Americans. This might suggest that the Laotians share a group cohesiveness and insulation that the Americans do not feel. Although this study deals with college-age adults, the findings serve to raise questions of whether some of these affective variables are valid for Indo-Chinese-American children and adolescents. However, the findings should be regarded as tentative as (1) the sample was small and unmatched on

certain characteristics, and (2) the instruments were translated from English to Vietnamese and Laotian and thus subject to equivalency problems.

In a study of children, Oanh and Michel (1977) used the Piers-Harris children's Self-concept Scale to examine the existence of significant differences in measures of several dimensions of self-concept and achievement between Vietnamese-Americans and other ethnic groups. They examined the score distributions and interview data with the particpatns in a pilot study in order to ascertain the cross-cultural validity of the test for monolingual Vietnamese-American children. They found that the activities in the measure were understood and answered with no apparent difficulty. The results show that Vietnamese-Americans--in comparison to Caucasians, Blacks, Mexican-Americans, non-Vietnamese Asians, and ethnically-mixed subsamples--score the lowest in their reported self-concept with reference to their physical appearance and attributes. They also rank lowest in the overall self-concept score. The investigators explain these results in terms of the Vietnamese cultural value of de-emphasizing one's physical appearance and attributes, with the salience of this value reflected in the findings.

Japanese-American

In the literature there exist two studies on the affective characteristics of Japanese-Americans. Onoda (1976) investigated the variation in attitudes toward academic achievement and personality characteristics among 144 third generation Japanese-Americans (Sanseis) in the tenth through the twelfth graders. The results show that high achieving Sanseis describe themselves on the Adjective Check List as being more confident of their abilities as well as more self-controlled and responsible among other characteristics. Underachieving Sanseis, however, report more doubt and apprehensions about themselves.

Matsumoto, Meredith and Masuda (1973), studied the ethnic identity among three generations of Japanese-Americans in Honoulu and Seattle. They developed a five-item questionnaire asking about preferences for Japanese things and inter-racial attitudes, among other variables. The questions regarding preference could have implications for ethnic self-esteem. However, the participants in the study were primarily adults and the instrument had not undergone rigorous validation.

Korean-American

While there are two studies on the self-esteem of Koreans in Korea and Korean-Canadians, none was located pertaining to Koreans in America. In summary, the preceding research revealed the following overall findings:

1. There is no significant difference between 2nd grade Chinese-American children in bilingual and those in monolingual English classes in terms of their measured self-esteem. At the 5th grade level, however, those in the bilingual program appear to feel generally better about themselves (global affect) than their counterpart. On the other hand, they tend to have lower academic self-esteem than those not in the bilingual program. Since the California Test of Basic Skillls (CTBS) scores was postively correlated with measured confidence in their social skills, the negative academic self-concept, among the 5th graders in bilingual programs might be interpreted to mean that they experience more difficulty in their interpersonal relationship than those in the monolingual English classes. This is an intriguing question that needs to be investigated.

2. Asian-American children tend to have a positive academic self-concept, particularly in comparison with other identifiable ethnic minority groups. However, those who have lower academic achievement express a more negative academic self-concept.

3 Asian-American children's academic self-concept seems to be the consequence of teacher's expectation of the student's academic performance.

4. Asian-American children's general self-concept may be associated with their interaction with the dominant group. That is, there is some indication that to be regarded and accepted as Americans by the domant group is related to a positive self-concept.

5. Asian-American children's evaluation of their self-concept or self-esteem may not necessarily correlate directly with their sense of affiliation with or affinity toward their membership group. As such, feeling positive about being Asian-Americans does not necessarily denote feeling or wanting to be close to other Asian-Americans and vice versa.

It must be emphasized that the above are preliminary findings based on extremely limited research. Furthermore, the uneven attention given to the various Asian-American populations and the lack of consistency in the definition, conceptualization and measurement of the self-concept hamper any attempt to draw generalizations regarding the various populations either separately or as a single unit.

Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

A major theoretical issue involved in research in self-concept is the question of the utility of this construct for understanding human conduct in general and the behaviors of bilingual Asian-American children in particular. In terms of self-concept or self-esteem, it has been asserted (Wells & Marwell, 1976) that "How people think of and evaluate themselves, both as a consequence of basic social conditions and as a predispostiion for subsequent behaviors, is an essential behavioral construct for interpreting human conduct. Self-esteem seems to be emerging as one of the key 'social indicators' in current analysis of social growth and progress." (1976, p. 250)

With respect to bilingual Asian-American children, a similar line of reasoning applies. In other words, how bilingual Asian-American children think of and evaluate themselves is an important behavioral concept for interpreting their behavior, irrespective of their actual responses to verbal self-report instruments. Related to this notion is the question of the meaning of the "self" for bilingual Asian-American children and adolescents and its implications for the assessment of self-concept for this group.

Asian-American children, as a whole, have been socialized in the belief that the primary unit in society is the family and not the individual. The individual is valued as an integral part of the family unit. One's personal identity, therefore, is defined in relation to the rest of the family network such that the needs and aspriations of the individual are seen as secondary to, and supportive of, the welfare of the family as a whole.

Given this perspective, the emphasis on the "self" in the idea of self-concept may very well reprsent a foreign notion to Asian-American children.

In accord with the traditional importance placed on the family, Asian-American children may respond on self-concept instruments in such a way as to de-emphasize their own signficance while correspondingly heightening the importance of others. Related to this is the value of humility which traditional Asian cultures uphold. The end result of this set of socialization experiences is that bilingual Asian-American children are likely to respond to conventional self-concept or self-esteem measures in ways that produce (a) an artifically lowered self-concept or self-esteem score,[1] or (b) an uninterpretable score with reference to the Western conceptual framework that highlights the importance of the individual as the primary unit. In light of this possibility, a self-concept instrument might be constructed such that it is capable of discriminating among the different conceptions of the

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[1]Theories of self-esteem have historically predicted a linear relationship between self-esteem and "adjustment," such that the higher the one, the greater the other. However, there is a contrasting "low self-esteem" model which offers behavioral predictions that are, at least in part, empirically supported. This latter model suggests that while low self-esteem is not necessarily more desirable, persons with low self-esteem have been found to score higher on measures of flexibility, ability to admit personal frailties, genuineness, and lower on authoritarianism, compared to their higher self-esteem counterparts (Wells and Marwell, 1976).

self. Moreover, the instrument might be administered to Asian-Americans who have been identified as being traditional or non-traditional while controlling for their socioeconomic status. The results would show (1) whether there is a difference between the two groups of Asian-Americans in terms of their sense of self in relation to the group, and (2) whether this individual-group distinction is related to self-concept or self-esteem. Finally, it would be most important to identify and delineate behavior correlates of positive self-concept. Such data are needed to verify the theories regarding the significance of this variable for Asian-American bilingual education.

A related theoretical issue is the need to isolate ethnic self-esteem or ethnic identity from a general self-concept or self-esteem. Arias (1975) demonstrated that feelings about one's ethnicity confounds one's feelings about himself/herself as a person.

The preceding review of literature on self-concept studies of bilingual Asian-American children revealed a scarcity of data on this specific subject. While some groups of Asian-Americans have received more attention than others, the accumulated knowledge on the whole appears lacking in the requisite rigor to achieve a clear validity. The major reason for this are:

a. Non-Differentation of Asian-American Population

Most of the studies reviewed neglected to describe the bilingual children being observed. Few investigators attempted to delineate the particpants in their study according to the subjects' specific linguistic ability and cultural experience. Consequently, the results may be inconsistent, indeed confounded, inasmuch as homogenity of the sample was assumed when in fact such is not the case. This lack of differentiation does not augment the existing state of knowledge and may indeed militate against the concept of cultural pluralism to recognize different populations within groups.

b. Non-Standardization of Tests

The non-standardization of tests is a difficulty prevalent in self-concept studies. Like most of the generic self-concept instruments, the available self-concept measures for bilingual Asian-Americans have tended to be developed in the United States and specifically for a given study or set of studies. Most of them are used for that purpose and subsequently abandoned or simply forgotten. Replication studies are exceedingly rare in this area of inquiry. Consequently, the instruments are "not only short-lived but of unknown quality as is the body of research findings based on their use." (Wells & Marwell, 1976, p. 79).

c. Non-Equivalency of Translations

The problem of validity is further compounded when an instrument is translated from English to another language, whether orally by the experimenter or through written means. Even if the translation is perfect, from a grammatical standpoint, there still remains the problem of conceptual non-equivalency. In short, the testing of a concept in a population for whom the same concept is unfamiliar or even antithetical would, in almost every instance, relegate that population to a low score that is difficult to interpret.

d. Demand Characteristics of the Testing Situation

Demand characteristcs refer to intervening variables which are extraneous to the topic under study but which are nevertheless salient enough to possibly bias the results. Such factors play a key role in self-concept research. For instance, virtually all measures of self-concept, including purportedly "non-verbal" measures, involve a fair to extensive degree of language comprehension (e.g., instructions) as well as expression (e.g., responding to items). Yet, linguistic ability is independent of self-concept. Another major factor that impinges on test performance is the response set known as social desirability. To review one's personal quality to strangers is, in the first place, an uncommon practice among most Asian-American children (Yee & Lee, 1977), particularly those who have not fully acculturated to the American way of life. Add to this the formality and judgmental nature commonly found in testing situations, and it is small wonder that the subject either gives a minimal response or produces what is believed to be an "acceptable" answer based on that subject's cultural frame of reference. Again, for reasons discussed previously, the result is likely to be a low score.

e. The Problem of Construct Validity

On a more general level, one of the principle methodological considerations of relevance of self-concept research is that of construct validity. Specifically, the question is two-fold and may be posed as follows: how does one observe the discreet manifestations of a social scientific notion--in this case, self-concept which is an abstract concept with multiple behavioral reference, and how does one assign quantitative values to it? Stated differently, the challenge to self-concept researchers is to derive instruments which are neither overly simplistic--and therefore, run the risk of sacrificing construct validity, nor overly global--and thereby face a very real possibility of not really measuring anything.[2]

The theoretical and methodological issues discussed in the foregoing are numerous and complex. Nevertheless, they are not insurmountable. Indeed, it can be said that there are problems that pertain to social scientific research in general. In assessing the state of the art of self-concept among bilingual Asian-American children I found this existing body of knowledge to be relatively scanty, and often flawed--from either a conceptual or as a design standpoint as is the case with much of this area of research involving other ethnic minority groups such as the Hispanic-Americans and Blacks (see Carter & Segura, 1979, for a discussion on this subject). Such findings should therefore be interpreted with caution and considered tentative at best. In terms of possible future directions, Wylie (1974) has postulated that the essential task is to establish a systematic accumulation of construct validity evidence. Similarly, Wells and Marwell (1976) suggest that for instance, self-concept researchers should attempt to reach a conceptual consensus, on the basis of which further investigations can proliferate. Certainly, these are difficult tasks, but the potential benefits far outweigh the costs.

With respect to self-concept research among bilingual Asian-American children, I offer the following recommendations:

1. Asian-American researchers with an interest in self-concept theories and studies should collaborate in developing conceptual frameworks that have relevance and applicability for Asian-American children. "Frameworks" is used in the plural because it is my opinion that at the first "cut" specific frameworks should be developed for discreet groups

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[2]Some possible approaches and techniques for establishing construct validity of affective dimension have been described by Shavelson, et al. (1976).

of Asian-American children (Cambodian-Chinese-American, Chinese-American, Filipino-American, Japanese-American, Korean-American, Vietnamese-American). Subsequent work can then incorporate the commonality of the various frameworks to form a more generic model that has wider applicability. Each framework should, of course, adhere to basic principles and theory-building and, equally important, take into account cultural/linguistic/social factors which impact on self-concept.

2. Instruments should be derived from each conceptual framework, giving careful attention to test-item construction and scaling. Collectively, the set of measures should capture the essential elements of the construct, in as an economical way as possible. In this connection, a great deal of creativity can come into play, particularly when developing measures for very young children who may not possess a high degree of language mastery. Another challenge for any age group is to develop valid and reliable behavioral measures as opposed to relying solely on self-reports.

3. Once developed and face validity is reached, the instruments should be subjected to rigorous field testing. Specifically, each instrument or measure should be standardized on the population to which it refers. Also, if the conceptual framework is truly cultural-fair in the sense that is contains no unfamiliar or loaded concepts, then each instrument derived strictly from the framework should be amenable to translation (in either direction) with no loss of equivalency. Results from the field tests should provide the data base to refine the instruments and even to revise the conceptual framework where warranted.

4. In every instance, the test situation itself should be as non-threatening and as familiar to the participant's experience as possible. The person administering the test(s) should be fluent in the participant's primary language and be attuned to the participant's cultural frame of reference. Group administration is a possibility as is non-participant behavioral observation of children in interactive settings.

5. Fruitful programs of research can be designed when the above tasks are near completion. These could involve conjoint studies of different groups of Asian-American children as well as investigations on the antecedents and consequences of self-concept. In this manner, the accumulation of knowledge regarding the self-concept of bilingual Asian-American children will truly be systematic and creditable.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the existing knowledge regarding the self-concept of Asian-American children, particularly in relation to bilingual education. I have argued that the special significance this construct holds for Asian-American children stems from the assumption that their identifiable physical characteristics, language orientation and general respect for the teacher act to make their self-concept highly vulnerable to the potential adverse effect of the English dominant school. The literature review, however, reveals a paucity of research on the assessment of these children's self-concept especially with reference to bilingual education. The scanty empirical evidence on the relationship between these children's self-concept and their academic, social and emotional well-being is both surprising and regrettable in view of the theoretical emphasis placed on reinforcing the self-concept as a primary goal of bilingual education.

I can see several possible explanations for this. One is that there are only a few Asian-Americans conducting educational or social scientific research (Yee, 1974). Hence, the number of Asian-American researchers who might pursue this line of inquiry is even smaller. However, nonAsian-Americans could also engage in this area of research as has been the case with the self-concept research among other ethnic minority groups such as Mexican-Americans. Yet, this raises the question of possible implicit cultural bias in the conceptualization, measurement and interpretation process in the research involving minority group members (see Carter & Segura, 1979, for a discussion of the bias in the self-concept research on Mexican-Americans).

A second conceivable reason for the impoverished literature is the prevalent mistaken assumption that Asian-American children are model students who encounter little academic difficulty and pose no behavioral probem in the classroom. Since much of the research interest in children's self-concept is in its potential relationship to academic

achievement, students who are thought to be achieving would presumably hold less attraction. Moreover, should evidence be mounting that not all Asian-American children, particularly those lacking English proficiency, are experiencing academic success and emotional well-being, the Asian-American population is small compared with the other larger ethnic minority populations. Thus, the academic concerns are far more visible and well publicized, while those of the Asian-American children would not qualify as an urgent educational problem demanding immediate major attention.

The scarcity of empirical data on Asian-American children's self-concept, irrespective of their language orientation, precludes the forming of generalizations regarding either each of the Asian-American populations separately or together as a single group. Rather, it seems more appropriate to delineate certain observations about the available data.

Similar to much of the larger body of self-concept literature (see Scheirer & Kraut, 1979; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976; and Wylie, 1961 for critical reviews of this body of literature), the assessment of bilingual Asian-American children's self-concept encounters definition, measurement, and interpretation problems. In addition, this line of research involving bilingual Asian-American children would entail other methodological concerns such as the questions of a) the non-differentiation of the Asian-American populations, b) the non-standardization of tests; c) the non-equivalency of translations; d) the demand characteristics of the testing situation, and e) the problem of construct validity. While these difficulties seem numerous and costly to overcome, I strongly believe that this line of inquiry is profoundly important for understanding the cognitive as well as the non-cognitive behavior of these children. This understanding is meaningful to the children, their teachers, and parents who are concerned with the children's total well-being. Furthermore, it is meaningful for the education community who is hopefully concerned with the total well-being

of all children regardless of their linguistical and cultural background. Moreover, the study of the academic self-concept as well as the overall self-concept of Asian-American children, irrespective of their language proficiency, may provide invaluable insight that can further clarify a) the relationship between self-concept and academic performance, and b) the social psychological consequences of schooling for the identifiable culturally and linguistically diverse children. This insight can greatly contribute to the analysis and possibly the prediction of human behavior in the intergroup processes in the American society.

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